Pavel took over the command, alert, confident of himself, sure of his men.

"The first thing to do is to bar the way. I shall be at the corner, with the speaker. You take places one step from each other. Dmitry, you are the last in the chain, the anchor man. Stepka's gang will fall into the line. When I give the command, link arms and stand firm!"

Men began to emerge from the darkness. The first groups of two or three—mostly young boys—came running. A few remained at the corner, others moved a few steps away. A human chain was taking shape, its far end disappearing in the dark.

More and more persons kept coming, all from the same direction. Suddenly Pavel barked the command, "Stop!"

In a moment a barricade of human bodies formed itself across the field. The first rows stopped by our boys added weight to the dam. An angry voice shouted from the rear, "Go on, you riffraff!"

Another voice roared, "What are you starting?"

"Be quiet, comrades," shouted Pavel. "The speaker will tell us. . . ."

"To hell with you and your speaker! You chose a nice place, a nice time."

"This won't be long," Pavel pleaded.

The boys in the chain began to shout, "Quiet! Quiet! Listen!"

I stepped forward, felt my feet sink into a puddle, and started to speak. "You are right, comrades," I said. "This is no place and no time for a meeting. And, of course, it is not fair to stop people by force and make them listen to a speaker whom they cannot see. But do you think it is fun for me to speak here in the darkness, standing in icy water?"

"That is true!" remarked a voice from the crowd.

Now it was easy to shift to freedom of speech, the right of workers to organize, their stake in the revolution.

My speech was interrupted by a shrill whistle. At the cry, "Cossacks!" the crowd dashed to safety. "There are no Cossacks!" Pavel shouted.

People reassembled, and I went on. I spoke of the fear the Tsarist government inspired in the workers and the workers inspired in the government. The revolution, I said, is the victory of men over fear. I did not have to search for words; my only effort was to talk loud enough. I stopped when I felt that I was losing my voice.

A tall oldish man who was standing close to me put his heavy hand on my shoulder and said, "All this is true! Thanks, comrade!"

"All is true!" resounded around me.

There was no applause, but I felt the speech had brought comfort